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(The image of John Smoltz was provided by the Red Sox.)

The **Boston Red Sox** said that the team is planning to launch a TV advertising campaign that will debut during local broadcasts Sunday of the National Football League's AFC and NFC Championship Games Sunday.

A TV ad titled "Can't Wait" is designed to promote ticket sales for the team's upcoming 2009 regular season, a Sox spokesman noted in an e-mail.

The ad will feature newly acquired pitcher John Smoltz (above), former slugger Jim Rice, a newly designated Hall of Famer; manager Terry Francona, Sox shortstop Jed Lowrie, and Red Sox mascot Wally, the spokesman said.

The campaign, created by the Sox marketing department working with Boston ad and public relations agency **Conover Tuttle Pace**, also features TV and radio ads that will air primarily during local news as well as during Boston Celtics games and local telecasts of Good Morning America and the Today Show, the Sox said.

Plans call for the new "Can't Wait" TV spot to be posted some time Saturday on the team's website, www.redsox.com, for early viewing, the Sox said.

The TV spot is part of a larger Sox marketing effort called the Road Trip, which recognizes that the team has to engage in aggressive marketing if it wants to keep Fenway Park full during tough economic times such as these.

Over this three-day holiday weekend, plans call for Red Sox road shows to visit multiple malls in Western Massachusetts and the other five New England states; fans at those locations will be offered vouchers that will enable them to buy tickets in advance of Jan. 24, the day that Red Sox tickets officially go on sale for the 2009 season, Sam Kennedy, Red Sox executive vice president and chief of sales and marketing, said during a phone interview.

In all, 6,500 vouchers will be available this weekend, with each voucher permitting a fan to buy two tickets, said Kennedy, who noted that 2009 ticket prices have been frozen at last year's levels.

Alluding to the recession, Kennedy said of the team's cranked-up marketing efforts, "We didn't want to sit here this off-season and just expect fans to buy tickets the way they have done in the past."

Even though the Sox have sold out every home game since May of 2003, Kennedy added of the team's outreach efforts, "These grass-roots initiatives also allow us to thank our loyal fans in the outer markets for their unwavering support."

The New York Times Co., which owns The Boston Globe, also owns 17 percent of the Sox's parent company.

The file photo of Lowrie that appears with this post was taken by Globe staffer Jim Davis.

(By Chris Reidy, Globe staff)